



The President's Daily Brief

January 20, 1976

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the deteriorating situation in Lebanon.

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LEBANON

Prime Minister Karami has agreed to reconsider his decision to resign as a result of a cease-fire arranged yesterday by President Franjiyah and Syrian President Asad. Franjiyah--presumably under heavy pressure from the Syrians--had refused to accept the Prime Minister's resignation.

Karami is now in a position to reassert himself in political negotiations that have recently been conducted almost exclusively between Franjiyah and the Syrians. Although Karami's announcement has eased concern--at least temporarily--that remaining government authority might collapse, there are as yet no signs that the warring factions have accepted the cease-fire. Franjiyah and Asad probably agreed to give each other considerable time to implement the accord, which apparently is only the broadest outline of a truce. [REDACTED]

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Franjiyah's chances of gaining Christian acceptance of the accord are slim. Christian militias have gained considerable momentum over the last week, and apparently are preparing for new advances on Muslim areas in Beirut. Phalangist forces yesterday took over most of Quarantina, a Muslim slum near the port area. They also secured two bridges across the Beirut River which open up their supply lines to the north.

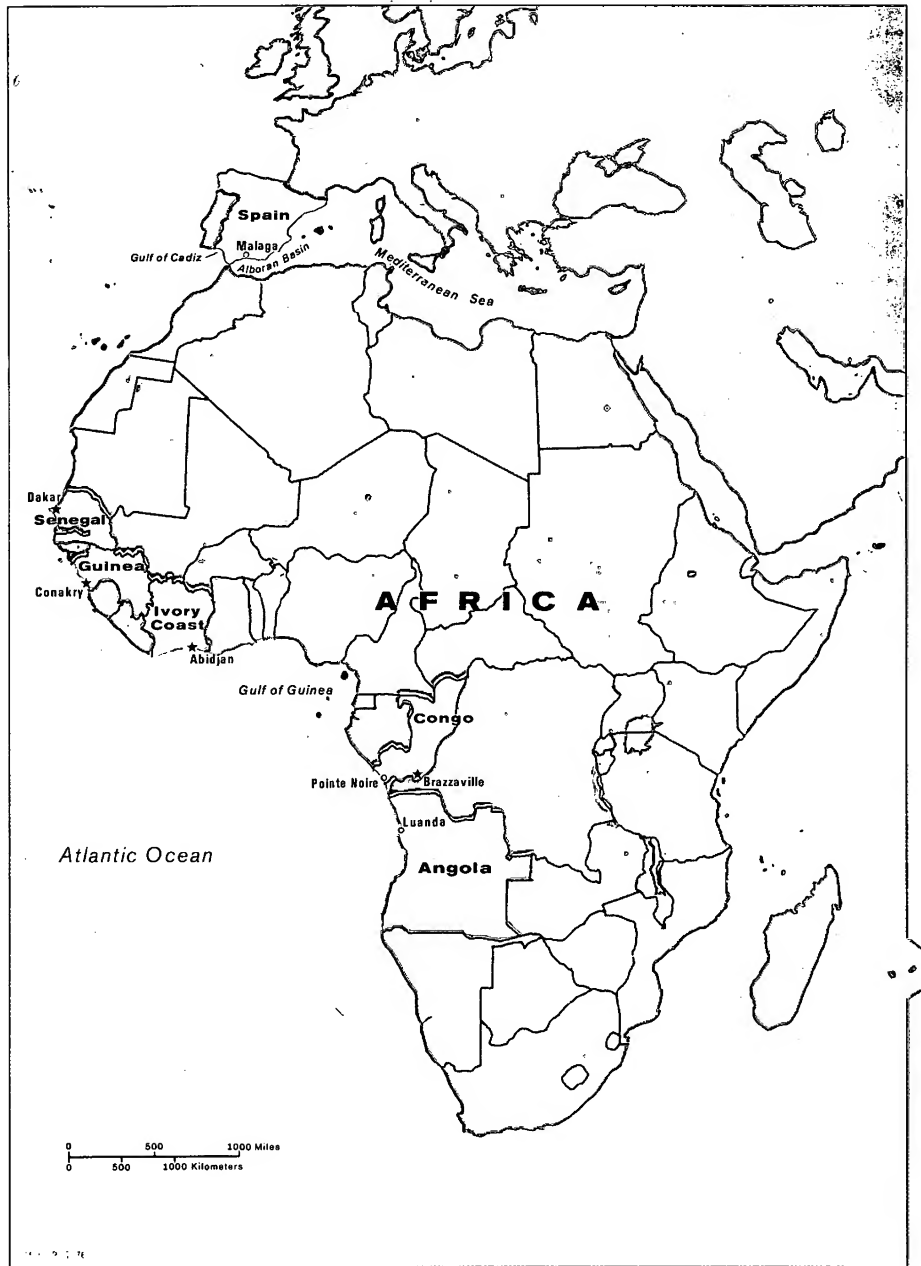
Fighting continued near Damour south of the capital, around Zahlah to the east, and in Tripoli, the northern provincial capital. [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] We have no evidence, however, to substantiate widely publicized claims by Interior Minister Shamun that thousands of Palestinian troops crossed into Lebanon yesterday.

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USSR

There has been little change since yesterday in the position of Soviet naval units in the western Mediterranean and off the west coast of Africa.

The Kashin-class destroyer that followed the USS Saratoga carrier group into the Mediterranean early on Monday is now located outside the Spanish port of Malaga, where the Saratoga is paying a port visit. The Sverdlov-class cruiser and two F-class submarines are still in the Alboran anchorage.

Off the African coast, an Alligator-class landing ship is still south of the Ivory Coast. The naval oiler that was accompanying the landing ship may now be heading back to Conakry.

The Kresta-II guided missile cruiser, Kotlin-class destroyer, and two oilers remain in or near Conakry.

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SPAIN

Spanish leftists will demonstrate in Madrid today in a bid to politicize labor unrest and test the government's willingness to tolerate dissent.

The two major coalitions of the leftist opposition who called for the rally--the Communist-dominated Democratic Junta and the Socialist-led Platform of Democratic Convergence--apparently hope to join forces with those workers now on strike to press demands for:

--a national referendum on the country's form of government,

--amnesty for all political prisoners,

--return of political exiles, and

--recognition of the rights of ethnic groups such as the Basques and Catalans.

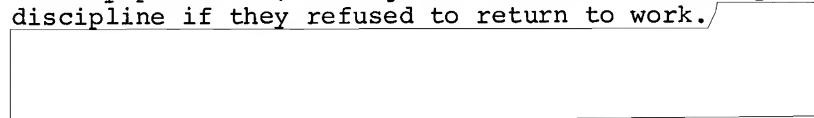


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So far, Fraga's security forces have relied primarily on tear gas and smoke bombs to disperse crowds.

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Rail services in Spain quickly returned to normal yesterday after the government drafted all railway personnel, making them liable to military discipline if they refused to return to work.



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NOTES

After considerable squabbling between Egypt and Syria, the Arabs have tentatively agreed on a draft resolution on the Palestinian question for consideration by the UN Security Council.

The text essentially calls on the Security Council to recognize: the inalienable rights of the Palestinians to self-determination, political independence and statehood in Palestine; the right of Palestine refugees to return to their former homes or obtain compensation for their property; and that Palestinian representatives must participate in any UN effort to establish peace in the region. By omitting any direct reference to the Palestine Liberation Organization, the Arabs, even though they do not believe they can avoid a US veto, are hoping to win the support of West European council members and isolate Washington.

* * *

The pace of the Soviet submarine construction program is such that 51 ICBM launchers must be fully dismantled by the end of February to meet requirements of the Interim Strategic Arms Limitation Agreement.

Photography shows that the Soviets had dismantled eight older ICBM launchers by early January, one more than required by that date. Currently 34 more above-ground SS-7s are being dismantled, and photography taken in December shows activity that is probably preliminary to the dismantling of at least nine additional SS-7 silos at three complexes in the eastern USSR.

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LEBANON

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The fighting in Lebanon has taken an ominous turn with the growing involvement in recent days of the Lebanese army and mainline Palestinian forces behind the Christian and Muslim Lebanese respectively. The escalation has occurred against the background of demographic shifts already leading towards de facto partition. The fighting will continue to escalate--albeit with temporary lulls--unless (a) there is a fundamental change in strategy by one of the factions, or (b) outsiders intervene politically to achieve a cease-fire and to force negotiations on a political settlement of the fundamental issues dividing the major factions.

In the absence of a durable cease-fire and with the continuation of heavy fighting, the situation is likely to develop in one of several ways.

Intensified Fighting and Fruitless Negotiating. Alternate periods of fighting and of guarded negotiating are almost certain to continue. This process is leading toward an all-out confrontation between the Lebanese armed forces and the Palestinians. This would differ from full-fledged civil war only in terms of the restraints that would continue to exist and in the political negotiating mechanisms that might still survive.

Full-fledged Civil War. The last vestiges of central authority would collapse, and the political leaders would abandon their feeble negotiating efforts. Civil war would lead to intense efforts by Damascus to force President Franjiah to accept a settlement that would give political concessions to the Muslims and confirm Palestinian freedom of action in Lebanon. The Christians, however, would seek to accelerate partition of the country.

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New Christian Moves. Only if the Christians conclude that they face major setbacks as a result of military reverses or inability to secure arms, would they adjust their strategy in recognition of their weaknesses. This could include a new willingness to negotiate, the resignation of President Franjiyah, or a military coup.

Outside Mediation. To have any chance of success, outside mediation would have to feature Syria. Prospects even then would be poor. As long as the Christians believe, as they now seem to believe, that they can hold their own militarily, they would not be receptive to mediation efforts, except as a tactical maneuver.

We consider that Syria and Israel are both exercising deliberate caution in their approach to the Lebanese problem. Although there is a possibility of miscalculation, it is unlikely that Syria or Israel will misjudge one another's intentions in Lebanon and accidentally spark general hostilities in the Middle East. We believe that Syrian regular forces are unlikely to intervene short of a radical change in the situation, such as an imminent defeat of the Palestinians or an Israeli occupation of southern Lebanon. The Israelis might be willing to hold back if the Syrians announced a limited incursion into the Beirut area or northern Lebanon, but would react immediately if Syrian troops entered the south. There is a good chance that wider hostilities in the Middle East would grow out of any direct clash between Syrian and Israeli forces.

Egypt is expressing growing concern over developments in Lebanon, and may undertake some vigorous mediation efforts.

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The Soviets are also showing concern over events in Lebanon. We consider that they would be likely to resupply the Palestinians through Syria if the fighting escalates, but would try to prevent the spread of fighting beyond Lebanon and to avoid direct intervention themselves.

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